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MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON LAUNCHES WORKERS' RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOR CREATIVE WORKERS

"Art is Labor." campaign ensures workers' rights are upheld in the creative sector through worker and employer education and resources.

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson, the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) launched a new workers' rights campaign for creative workers, "Art is Labor." The multi-department effort was designed with input from stakeholders including 3Arts, Arts Alliance Illinois, Chicago Cultural Alliance, Lawyers for the Creative Arts, Mezcla Media Collective, other cultural and community organizations – and artists.

"Art is more than just expression; it is labor, and our creatives deserve the same protections and rights as all workers," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "With the 'Art is Labor.' campaign, we are ensuring that artists and creative professionals are educated about their rights and supported in their work, fostering a fair and just environment for all who contribute to Chicago's vibrant cultural landscape."

The "Art is Labor." campaign announcement is part of Mayor Johnson's Chicago Workers' Rights Week, an initiative to raise awareness around the important changes to labor laws that will go into effect on Monday, July 1. To view informational fliers, Frequently Asked Questions, and public notices on Chicago's labor laws, visit Chicago.gov/LaborStandards.

As of July 1, several labor laws will take effect that impact workers in the creative sector, including the scheduled annual increase in Chicago's minimum wage, implementation of the Paid Leave and Paid Sick and Safe Leave Ordinance, and a scheduled enhancement of the Fair Workweek Ordinance requirements. Additionally, the State of Illinois Freelance

Worker Protection Act (FWPA) goes into effect. FWPA requires providing written contracts, timely payments, and protection from retaliation.

“By launching this campaign, BACP reaffirms its commitment to promoting transparency, equality, and respect in the workplace,” said **BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer**. “BACP oversees Chicago’s landmark laws and ensures all of Chicago’s workers, including those in the creative sector, are protected. Creative workers and entrepreneurs contribute to our local economy by creating jobs, unique products, and cultural experiences. There is no denying that art is labor and BACP is here to support through resources and engagement.”

“Time and again we hear from our creative workforce – Chicago’s visual and performing artists, writers, technicians, arts administrators, and others – that their labor goes uncompensated, that it is taken for granted, that there are too few boundaries,” shared **DCASE Commissioner Clinée Hedspeth**. “This campaign is a resounding response and an acknowledgment that art is labor. It is a starting point to bring attention to the laws, protections, and resources that exist for creative workers, and to build momentum and partnerships to ensure that creative workers can thrive in Chicago.”

The City’s first-ever creative workers campaign reflects the diversity of the creative sector through the visual representation of performing arts, arts management, filmmaking, and more. The campaign informs workers about their rights, which is crucial for empowering workers, promoting fairness and equity, and creating a culture of compliance. By providing creative workers with the knowledge and resources they need to navigate the work complexities of the sector, the campaign can contribute to a more inclusive, just, and respectful work environment for all.

“The Freelance Worker Protection Act establishes a framework of understandable and transparent expectations for independent creative workers in Illinois, to better protect their work, and compensation,” said **Illinois Department of Labor Director Jane Flanagan**.

Components of the campaign include:

- **Access to Information:** Through a variety of channels, including social media, print materials, and digital resources, vital information about workers' rights is accessible. From minimum wage requirements to wage theft, the campaign covers laws and topics relevant to the creative sector. To serve as a centralized hub of information, a dedicated webpage ([Chicago.gov/CreativeWork](https://chicago.gov/CreativeWork)) has been created with educational materials related to worker rights for creative workers, and resources for employers of creative workers.
- **Interactive Webinars:** BACP and DCASE are hosting free interactive webinars for workers and employers to learn about Chicago labor laws and ask questions. To register for a webinar, visit [Chicago.gov/BACPwebinars](https://chicago.gov/BACPwebinars).
 - Tuesday, July 9 at 10:00 a.m.: Employers of Creative Workers: Know Applicable Labor Laws (English)



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- Tuesday, July 16 at 10:00 a.m.: Creative Workers: Know Your Worker Rights (English)
- Tuesday, July 23 at 10:00 a.m.: Employers of Creative Workers: Know Applicable Labor Laws (Spanish)
- Tuesday, July 30 at 10:00 a.m.: Creative Workers: Know Your Worker Rights (Spanish)
- **Empowerment Through Knowledge:** At its core, the campaign is about empowering workers to advocate for themselves and others, and ensuring employers have the resources they need for fair and safe workplaces. By arming workers and employers with the knowledge and tools they need to navigate complex workplace dynamics, we aim to foster a culture of accountability and fairness.

In addition to the webinars, DCASE’s Cultural Resources team will be launching Office Hours in July. Dates and times will be posted on the campaign website and shared through DCASE social media.

“Lawyers for the Creative Arts applauds and strongly supports the City of Chicago’s ‘Art is Labor.’ awareness campaign. We assist creative workers in obtaining – and protecting – the fruits of their creative labor. So, we know first-hand how important it is for those in the arts to understand their legal rights and where to get help if needed,” said **Elsa Hiltner, Director of Programs at Lawyers for the Creative Arts (LCA)**. “The ‘Art is Labor.’ initiative is an important partnership with non-profits like LCA in supporting artists and arts organizations as they navigate the complexities of the law.”

“Arts Alliance is proud to partner with the City of Chicago to raise awareness, offer resources, and advance critical policy supports for creative workers across Chicago. This campaign reflects our ongoing commitment to protect and invest in the vibrancy of the creative workforce across our great city and state,” said **Claire Rice, Executive Director at Arts Alliance Illinois**.

The “Art is Labor.” campaign responds to repeated calls from the creative community for clear standards and resources for the field, most recently stated in the 2023 Citywide Plan, and in the 2023 Transition Report. It builds on DCASE’s efforts last year to provide emergency resources to the field via Chicago.gov/CreativeWorkerResources. The materials created for this campaign, and those that will be released in the coming months, have been developed through feedback from an Advisory Committee consisting of nonprofit arts leaders, independent artists, and advocates. Information on how to partner with the campaign and contribute to on-going conversations is available at Chicago.gov/CreativeWork.

All Chicago worker protections are enforced by the BACP Office of Labor Standards (OLS). The OLS is dedicated to promoting and enforcing Chicago's labor laws, including Minimum Wage, Paid Leave and Paid Sick and Safe Leave, Fair Workweek, and Wage Theft Ordinance. To file a labor standards complaint, workers can use the CHI 311 system (call 3-1-1, use the CHI311 mobile app, or visit 311.chicago.gov) or complete a [Complaint Form](#). For information on Chicago's Labor Laws, visit Chicago.gov/LaborStandards.

Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

The City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) supports artists and cultural organizations, invests in the creative economy, and expands access and participation in the arts throughout Chicago's 77 neighborhoods. As a collaborative cultural presenter, arts funder, and advocate for creative workers, our programs and events serve Chicagoans and visitors of all ages and backgrounds, downtown and in diverse communities across our city — to strengthen and celebrate Chicago. DCASE produces some of the city's most iconic festivals, markets, events, and exhibitions at the Chicago Cultural Center, Millennium Park, and in communities across the city — serving a local and global audience of 25 million people. The Department offers cultural grants and resources, manages public art, supports TV and film production and other creative industries, and permits special events throughout Chicago. For details, visit Chicago.gov/DCASE and [stay connected via our newsletters and social media](#).

Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection

The Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) ensures a fair and vibrant marketplace for businesses, workers and consumers in the City of Chicago. BACP licenses businesses and public vehicles, regulates business activity, protects consumers from fraud, enforces Chicago's labor laws, partners with business service organizations and provides education and resources for businesses. For more information, visit Chicago.gov/BACP.

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